Young Artists Discover

By BERT BINNY

NEW FIELDS to CONQUER

ON **FRIDAY, MARCH 6,** at Newstead Hall on Fort Street, the Victoria Branch of the Registered Music Teachers' Association held another in their series of practice recitals for young music students.

The purpose here was not so much to display enormous talent or even promise. It was to expose the performers to the audience.

"A fool," observes a Danish proverb, "is like other men as long as he is silent." So, except to those who know him intimately, is the artist. No matter how stupendous the talent, it has to be known to be appreciated but, at the same time, only experience before audiences perfects performance.

In the musical interest the Canadian Federation of Music Teachers' Associations is one organization that not only appreciates the problem of securing deserved recognition for young artists but, also, attacks it. This they do through presentations known as the Young Artists Series. The Victoria Association supports these as well as the practice recitals.

EDMUND ASSALY

WINNIFRED SCOTT

PAT CREASEY

RECOLLECTIONS

My own most vivid recollections of an early education in music are three. The first is that of a piano teacher in England who was greatly given to rapping my knuckles with a pencil or any other convenient weapon when — as frequently—I mistook F for G, a sharp for a flat or a minimum for a semibreve. I also remember with singular clarity the utterly shameful business of playing "Farmyard Scenes" ("The Babbling Brook," "Early Morning," "Dickie Birds in the Orchard" and so forth) in duet with an older sister whose attitude was palpably that of the complete artist inexplicably saddled with a musical moron. Thirdly, I recall sitting on the floor at elementary school, making dismal and quite unconvincing arm movements and adding a small but, nevertheless, noticeably tuneless voice to a chorus of fellow sufferers singing "Here We Float in Our Golden Boat."

I cannot lay claim to an early devotion to music in any of its departments. Least of all, basing my judgment solely on my own experience, was I devoted to music teachers.

Perhaps, therefore, I, as an alumnus of the knuckle-rapping school, perceive the very maximum of virtue in the Registered Music Teachers of Victoria and elsewhere whose constructive interest in young musicians proceeds far beyond the indoctrination of scales, attention to techniques and purely localized performances.

TWO AWARDS

VRMTA provides two awards at the Music Festival; one to the competitor receiving the highest mark in adult vocal solo classes, Grade "B," and the other to the winner of Class 77, pianists 15 years old or under.

Every year, also, the RMTA stages two or three student practice recitals and these, in cause and effect, exactly resemble the Young Artists' Series although, of course, they are not such comprehensive and far-reaching affairs.

All these recitals are beneficial for several reasons.

Firstly, they are designed to introduce and accustom promising students to public performance. Secondly, they inevitably show whether the participants have the necessary attributes to succeed in a very demanding profession. Thirdly, they show the participants themselves just what those demands are and enable them to decide for themselves on the basis of actual experience whether they can, literally, face the music. Fourthly, they demonstrate strength and weaknesses under circumstances far more stringent than playing or singing in home or studio. Fifthly, they do bring those same promising performers before the public.

The Young Artists Series started in 1942, the first performer being Edmund Assaly of Saskatoon. Mr. Assaly is now a teacher, composer and performer in Montreal and he directed the music for McGill University's "My Fur Lady."

Victoria affiliated with the Music Teachers Federation in 1947. Previously, John Beckwith of Victoria whose mother, Mrs. H. A. Beckwith, lives at 1149 Victoria Avenue, had performed in Vancouver and Victoria under RMTA sponsorship. Mr. Beckwith now instructs in piano at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and the first performance of his opera, "The Night Blooming Cereus" was broadcast on the trans-Canada network of the CBC on March 4. The work was conducted by Dr. Ettore Mazzoleni, Conservatory principal.

SPREADING EAST

Up until this year when an eastern Young Artists tour is being inaugurated, the series has covered only the four western provinces. There have been two tours annually; one involving two artists in the fall and the second, with a pianist only, in the spring.

Two young Victoria musicians have been selected to go on tour since 1947. One was pianist Joan Molloy, now Mrs. J. Foot of Calgary. In the fall of 1952 Miss Pat Shakespeare, another pianist, was chosen. Now Mrs. Milton Creasey of 1491 Myrtle Street, Pat observes: "That tour decided me that it wasn't what I wanted!"

An experience is just as valuable for what it disproves as for what it proves.

Both these performers were students of Stanley Shale who is now in England.

Quite a few young artists whose first taste of touring and giving performances as strangers in strange lands have gone on to high successes.

Mr. Beckwith is one. Another, quite familiar to Victorians now, is Winifred Scott of Winnipeg. She toured under RMTA auspices in 1943. Now the wife of Victoria's Robin Wood, she is an instructor at the Royal Academy in London, England, and both were heard in recital here recently.

Boyd MacDonald, Saskatoon pianist, toured in 1951. Later, in Paris where he was furthering his training, he met and married soprano Sylvia Stuart an RMTA performer in 1955.

And there have been many others who, following RMTA Young Artists tours, have gone on to find not only greater fields ripe for conquest but to find themselves in better shape to do the conquering. These are such as Malcolm Tait, Vancouver 'cellist; Mary Lou Dawes, Calgary pianist; Valery Lloyd, Edward Lincoln, James Lamond, Helen Voss and others.

Violinist Andrew Dawes and pianist Douglas Voice were the latest to visit Victoria. They appeared here on Oct. 22.

IN VICTORIA at present the RMTA has approximately 30 members with six to eight associate members. The president is Mrs. Sybil Holtsman, the vice-president Miss Mary Adamson, Miss Florence Phillimore is recording secretary and her counterpart in the corresponding department Miss Gipsie Mahaffy. Miss Elise Le Gresley is treasurer.

Anyone who has plunged themselves into the business of putting on shows, however, modest, realizes that the job can boost the sale of aspirins and the like to an unbelievable degree. It isn't easy and, on top of this, it's all voluntary in the instance of RMTA performances by the young artists.

Firstly, the artists in question have to be selected. Locally, the RMTA sets up the concert, takes care of tickets and programs and promotes the whole affair. The artists are under their guidance throughout their stay in Victoria. Finally, a full report on both the artistic and the financial results has to be compiled.

The artists themselves receive no remuneration beyond their expenses and an honorarium granted by Lyell Gustin of Saskatoon whose activities inspired the whole idea of the tours 17 years ago.

At every elevation in the producing business, there are the affairs which simply don't come off. Sometimes the reasons are not hard to find; frequently they are. Public fancy, always fickle, has a lot to do with it.

SPONSORS UNDAUNTED

Unfortunately, and particularly among performances where the benefits are not measured by the swelling in the producers' bank balances, adequate support is not always forthcoming. This applies to some of the Young Artists Series and, indeed, to several other quite similar efforts promoted by several other quite similar organizations.

The most important point accruing to this state of affairs is that the sponsors do continue. Despite disappointment the RMTA and the other organizations do not give up. This, above everything else, is to their eternal credit.

It is easy to ride the crest of the wave and maintain a successful operation. It is something else again to persist with a venture only because you are convinced it is worthwhile.

The RMTA, therefore, is not only due for high commendation because of the unselfish and constructive work it does in behalf of the young artists but, also, for even greater commendation for perservering in the face of numerous difficulties not the least of which is rather widespread indifference. Undoubtedly, the future of Canadian arts owes them no little debt.